

## Seafarers Exploited

John McLister

Benji Sator is a seafarer from the Philippines. He arrives in Lyttelton every 6 weeks on a container ship. The first thing Benji wants to do when he arrives in port is call his wife Maria. He knows she and the kids will be at home at dinner time, about 9 pm NZ time. So, upon arrival, if our Centre is not open, he will head up to the library and stand in freezing wind and tell his wife he is fine and his daughter that he loves her, as his hands turn blue from the cold.

While in port, Benji likes to stock up on few personal items. There is no bank in Lyttelton, but local businesses will happily exchange the US dollars he is paid for NZ dollars at a rate of US\$1 for every NZ\$1. Everyone knows there is usually at least 30-35% difference in the exchange rate in favour of the NZ dollar. For every US\$100 he breaks, Beni is \$40 out of pocket on the exchange rate alone. That is \$40 dollars loss for a man who earns in a month what some CEOs of port companies earn in an hour.

Last month, he wanted to go to the city, so called a taxi. The taxi driver charged him US\$100 for a lift into town That is 10% of what Benji earns in a month. A fare to town should cost about NZ\$45 dollars.

### International Sea Sunday

On International Sea Sunday, we recognise seafarers, the poorly paid and often exploited international workforce who leave home and families to transport goods by ship to our shores. They are a group of people we often ignore, sometimes don't even see.

Yet they are essential to our lives. I got out of bed this morning, put on my clothes, used my toaster, drank coffee, sat on my couch, watched a bit of TV and drove here in my car. Every one of those items, from bed to car, was transported across the globe on merchant ships manned by seafarers. About 95% of all NZ imports and exports are transported by sea. Our economy, the world's



economy and our daily lives are totally dependent on those who work on these merchant and fishing fleets.

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The gospel of the Good Samaritan offers us a good insight as to what Sea Sunday is about. It is not just the obvious one – that we should help those in need. Jesus says to the professor of religion, ‘You are missing something. You are not seeing the Samaritan as a person.’ Samaritans lived on the fringes of his society, they were the outsiders. They were the immigrants a country does

not want. What Jesus says is, ‘you are not seeing the good that Samaritans do.’ Isn't this a sobering message about immigrants for today's world?

In our Gospel there is also another character, a traveler who is attacked on the road. Travel in Jesus time was a dangerous thing, especially for those transporting goods. For those who work on the ocean in our own time, it can be a dangerous place too. A seafarer can be endangered from shipwreck, piracy, dangerous work, industrial accidents and exploitation by employment agents, officers and shipping companies. Safety and fair wages are worldwide issues.

It is a highly profitable industry. In 2017, NZ ports made a total post-tax profit of \$260 million, paying millions of dollars in dividends to the City Councils that own them. Possibly this is because our ports are well managed? But more probably, it is because shipping companies are charged huge fees to tie up at NZ wharves, fees they can afford to pay, because they use cheap labour - from the Philippines, India, China, South Korea and other countries to crew their ships.



## Lyttelton Port

In February 2011, our Port of Lyttelton was very badly damaged in the second earthquake. Holy Trinity Anglican, St Joseph's Catholic and the Presbyterian church buildings were all destroyed. Every member of those congregations was affected, many had homes in ruin.

At about the same time, 32 Indonesian fishermen walked off their Korean-owned trawler that had just docked at Lyttelton. They were found huddled in the doorway of the Union Chapel, the only church left standing in the port. *The Press* reported that they claimed they were being physically and sexually abused by the officer of the ship. One had blood pouring from his head. A Korean officer had hit him with a crow bar.

The people in the Church communities of Lyttelton did not pass by on the other side of the road. They offered these men sanctuary. This story gained traction in the media, and the *Sunday Star Times* started running articles about the slavery on merchant ships at sea in NZ waters. Auckland University did research on the situation. They discovered men were being forced to work many consecutive days, with shifts ranging from 16 to 53 hours, for as little as 49 cents an hour. They often faced physical violence, sexual abuse and debt entrapment by the employment agents.

### Who are we?

Members of Te Wairua Maranga Trust, which publishes this paper, have since August 1989 been operating as a community following a Catholic Worker spirituality. We view the Treaty of Waitangi as our nation's founding covenant. We try, however inadequately at times, to live the Sermon on the Mount and its modern implications. We operate three houses of hospitality in Christchurch named after Suzanne Aubert, Joseph Cardijn and Thomas Merton. We offer hospitality to people in need either on a temporary or more permanent basis. We have a continuing outreach to a number of families offering friendship and support. We promote non-violence and a 'small is beautiful' approach to life, practise co-operative work and peacemaking, focus on issues of justice, support prison ministry, help create intentional communities, and try to practise voluntary poverty and personalism.

We engage in regular prayer and we also celebrate a liturgy every Wednesday at 6:00 pm at the Suzanne Aubert House, 8A Cotterill St, Addington, (off Poulson St, near Church Square), followed by a shared meal. Anyone is welcome – phone Francis, 338-7105.

We do not seek funding from traditional sources. We hope to receive enough to keep our houses of hospitality open and our various works going. Catholic Worker houses do not issue tax receipts since they are running neither a business nor a church social agency. We invite people to participate personally and unconditionally. Should you wish to make a regular contribution, you may do so through our Te Wairua Maranga Westpac Trust holding account (number 031703-0036346-02). Donations may also be made to **Te Wairua Maranga Trust, Box 33-135, Christchurch.** *The Common Good:* Editor: Jim Consedine - jim.conse@xtra.co.nz; Layout - Barbara Corcoran - burkespass@gmail.com

[www.catholicworker.org.nz](http://www.catholicworker.org.nz)

This news did not go down well overseas. Several companies stopped buying NZ fish. This finally forced the National-led Government to look at the situation. They brought in new legislation to affect that all foreign fishing vessel in NZ waters are to be NZ-flagged. This means they must comply with our maritime rules and the Health and Safety at Work Act.

This is a dramatic example. But sometimes helping out a traveler, can be a simple thing, like letting them use your wi-fi so they can contact home. For some years after the earthquakes, if you walked down London St, in Lyttelton, you'd see an odd sight at night time. At the end of the road, outside the library, there were little lights glowing. And there in the dark about 10pm would be about a dozen seafarers staring into their phones. It could be freezing cold in July or August, the middle of winter. They had nowhere else to go. At that time, there was no Seafarer Centre available. There were simply no buildings left standing after the quakes for seafarers to use.

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### Ecumenical Success

About that time at a national level, the Mission to Seafarers (MtS) approached the Apostleship of the Sea (AoS) with a proposal to re-establish a Lyttelton Centre. Money was raised to purchase a couple of port-a-coms which were quickly in place. Having set up the necessary infrastructure, the Lyttelton Seafarers Centre re-opened in 2015, blessed by leaders from both Catholic and Anglican Churches.

While it still only opens for three hours each evening, in the 3 years since, we have had over 10,000 visits from seafarers docking in Lyttelton. Five nights a week, a volunteer opens the Centre, switches on the heat pump, and gives an inquiring seafarer our password so they can access our free wi-fi. During those hours, they don't need to stand out in the dark and freezing cold anymore. The most common sound you hear in the Centre these nights is not the voices of the seamen, but the voices of their wives and children talking from overseas and laughing and chatting on Skype to a husband, a parent, a sibling.

On Seafarers Sunday, we highlight and honour seafarers' vital contribution to our country, our way of life and our economy. It's a way of saying thanks for their hard work.

*Rev John McLister, an Anglican priest, is chair of the Lyttelton Seafarers Centre Charitable Trust.*

## Editorial 1 Providing Seafarers Centres - a justice issue

*Those who go down to the sea in ships, who do business on mighty waters,*

*See the works of the Lord, and God's wonder in the deep. Ps 107/23*

Every year, thousands of poorly paid seafarers come to our shores on merchant ships to bring good and much needed materials to make the infra-structure of New Zealand better for all of us. Yet we provide them little hospitality when they disembark on our shores. This is unlike passengers who come on cruise ships and spend millions of dollars in our shops. They get everything possible laid on for their comfort and wellbeing.

We have a different standard for the workers, the seafarers. Most ports have virtually nothing to offer by way of hospitality. A seafarers' centre, run on a volunteer basis with huge time and financial constraints, may or may not be located in port. If one is, maybe it is open for only a few hours, while a vessel could be in port for up to a week.

### Maritime Labour Convention

New Zealand is a signatory to the Maritime Labour Convention, an International Labour Organisation (ILO) Treaty signed in 2006. It covers almost every aspect of seafarer life and work on board ship, including the provision of shore-based welfare facilities for seafarers when in port. The Convention came into force in New Zealand in March 2017.

Among many other provisions, the Convention recommends that members should take measures to ensure

that **'adequate welfare facilities and services are provided for seafarers in designated ports of call.'** However, it makes no mandatory designation as to who should fund such services, instead recommending they come *'from grants from public funds, or levies or other special dues from shipping.'*

At this point, none of this is happening in NZ. Instead, voluntary groupings like the Apostleship of the Sea (AoS) and the Mission to Seafarers (MtS) are having sausage sizzles, dance nights and raffles to raise funding to try and keep centres open for seafarers when they call. Secondary students volunteer of an evening to help with money transfers, purchases of food items, organise internet access for seafarers and strum the occasional guitar.

Let's be clear. It is long past time for City Councils, who own the ports and make millions of dollars from them annually, to step up and put some solid regular finance towards providing seafarers safe, hospitable and just conditions on shore. After all, port companies made a total post-tax profit of \$260 million in 2017. Also, there is absolutely no reason why a small levy (eg \$50 – 100) shouldn't be charged from every ship that comes into port to help towards funding such a resource. This dollar amount collected would be peanuts compared to the more than \$20 000 ship owners can pay to tie up dockside for a 24-hour stay.

This is an issue primarily about the decent treatment of seafarers. It's a human rights issue. A matter of justice - and hospitality.

—Jim Consedine

## Editorial 2 Loan Sharks Targeted

We welcome the introduction by the Government of amendments to the *Credit Contracts and Consumer Finance Act*. While it is nowhere near what we believe is necessary, it is a large step towards curbing the usurious practices of loan sharks who have been charging 'establishment fees' and 'annual programme fees' in addition to exorbitant rates of interest on short-term loans to the poorest in our communities. This has been systemic theft by any other name. And all defended as OK by previous Governments, 'because that is the way the market works.'

'The introduction of an interest and fees cap on high-cost loans should help prevent people from accumulating large debt from a single small loan,' said Commerce and Consumer Affairs, Minister Kris Faafoi. We certainly hope so. Truck shops or mobile traders, which tend to prowl the less advantaged districts selling to the more gullible at excessive interest rates of repayment, will be reined in and their owners/drivers will have to pass, 'a fit and proper person test' to be able to trade. Who measures character and what values are used to decide eligibility will be interesting.



### Christmas Amnesty

A Christmas amnesty this year to those in the greatest debt up to a limited figure to be paid from the recent Government surplus would be a just and proper move even on a one-off basis. Why not? In the past, the Government has bailed out the BNZ (\$1 billion), Air NZ (\$885m), South Canterbury Finance (\$1.26b), AMI (\$500m), and many other smaller finance companies without missing a step? If stock market shareholders, many of them among our wealthiest citizens, can be the beneficiaries of government largess, why not 'bailout' a few among our poorest. Surely, their culpability for their plight is less than for those who control the financial system and know how it works.

Such an amnesty would take thousands of our poorest people out of immediate debt and give them a fresh start for the coming year. For this Government, opportunity might only knock once for such 'a structural adjustment'. Why not email your local MP and put the case for amnesty? [firstname.surname@parliament.govt.nz](mailto:firstname.surname@parliament.govt.nz)

—Jim Consedine

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# The Eucharist – a cosmic vision

Jim Consedine

At our weekly Catholic Worker gatherings around NZ, we often reflect on the nature of the Eucharist and its centrality. We are conscious that it was established in the context of service, of Jesus washing his disciples' feet at the Last Supper. For us that means washing one another's feet, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, sheltering the homeless, visiting the imprisoned, creating community. Herein lies the core of the Eucharist, our greatest miracle of love.

Sometimes we have wonderful fresh insights. But more often we are stuck with our childhood or adolescent teachings and never advance much beyond them. Our CW communities provide the living Word, nourishment and community – all important dimensions of Eucharistic fellowship. But there is so much more to learn about a ritual so vital to our spiritual wellbeing.

Theologian and popular writer Daniel O'Leary has helped me immensely. He says, 'Something amazing is happening. Something that could never have happened before now. A new mind-set and a new heart-set are emerging. There is a new opportunity for struggling believers to find their way once again. A radically different understanding of the central dimensions of the Christian faith are now being offered. This is a profoundly moving way of seeing old teachings in a new and exciting light – a way that was impossible before recent theological renewal and startling scientific discoveries. A fresh picture of the beauty of our faith is daily becoming clearer... We now know we are living in a very unfinished universe still at the dawn of its creation, a universe that is still evolving and will continue to do so.' *An Astonishing Secret*, p16

Teilhard de Chardin, the famous Jesuit palaeontologist who had such an influence on Vatican II, saw everything created as holy and in the 1930s prayed the Eucharistic prayer in the wildness of Asia. 'Since once again, Lord, I have neither bread, nor wine, nor altar, I will raise myself beyond these symbols, up to the real majesty of the Real itself. I will make the whole earth my altar and on it I will offer you all the labours and sufferings of the world. I will place on my paten, O God, the harvest to be won by this renewal of labour. Into my chalice I will pour all the sap which is to be pressed out this day from the earth's fruits.'

This is dramatic stuff bringing the whole of creation into the Eucharist, this sign of God's presence in our world. It's a vision, 90 years old, way beyond the traditional understanding. Yet more and more it is making sense as we get to comprehend our evolving universe better.



## Cosmic faith

I really like the image theologian Richard Rhor OFM offers as a description of the cosmic dimension of the Eucharist. He helps expand our vision.

'I see a picture of our blue planet with a large bread and a chalice of wine poised above it, and the risen Christ offering himself as spiritual food and drink for all the people. Then I see Christ as Lord of all creation lifting his eyes to include all the stars, all the galaxies, all the black holes, all the as yet undiscovered material, all the 'dark matter' of the cosmos. Indeed, the Eucharist has a cosmic character. Yes, cosmic!'

He was reflecting on one of the most theologically interesting sections of his 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si'* when Pope Francis wrote, 'In the Eucharist, fullness is already achieved; it is the living centre of the universe. ... In the Eucharist, the whole cosmos gives thanks to God. Indeed, the Eucharist is itself an act of cosmic love.' (*para* 236)

Drawing on the teaching of John Paul II and coupled with his own personal reflections on Teilhard de Chardin's writings on the Cosmic Christ, Francis concluded that 'the Eucharist is the centre of the universe.' A cosmic event! Centre of the universe! The centre of the whole cosmos!

## Meaning for today

While these words formed only a small part of the encyclical, I personally have found them most inspiring. I knew they were saying something profound, way beyond anything I had ever been taught in the seminary or read about in subsequent years.

What does all this mean? For example, how did these words apply to peoples' attendance at the Eucharist on a Sunday? Did they mean that the moon and the stars, planet Earth itself, indeed the whole ever-expanding universe is somehow present in our church whenever we celebrate the Mass? That as people we are especially connected to them through the Eucharist? It certainly sounds like that. Wow!

Francis quotes John Paul II from his 2003 encyclical, when John Paul embraced a panoramic vision of the Eucharist, calling it cosmic. In recalling the many different venues where he had celebrated Mass, John Paul wrote:

*'This varied scenario of celebrations of the Eucharist has given me a powerful experience of its universal and, so to speak, cosmic character. Yes, cosmic! Because even when it is celebrated on the humble altar of a country church, the Eucharist is always in some way celebrated on the altar of the world. It unites heaven and*

earth. It embraces and permeates all creation.' (Ecclesia de Eucharistia, 8)

### **Mystery, faith and science**

Maybe we can only attempt to grasp such huge developments and mysteries through metaphors like Richard Rohr offers. How do we grapple with God, our Great Creator Spirit, being the mover behind the creation of hundreds of billions of galaxies, with possibly billions more to come in an ever-expanding universe? The teaching of John Paul II and Francis is that that each particle of these galaxies contains the creative presence of God.

What is our response to this expanded vision? Where does this inter-connectedness leave us in terms of our love of neighbour? Relationship to the environment? The rest of Creation? The other planets? Where does it connect with our relationship with Jesus? How then does all this link to the Eucharist? The questions are mind boggling.

I suggest the answers are partly found in faith, partly in science. To begin, we need to recognise that the living Christ is present in both faith and science. The two

complement each other. The Church teaches that the whole of Creation has been redeemed by Christ's death and resurrection. 'The whole of Creation will come together under Christ', says St Paul (*Eph 3/1-10*). This means that everything ever created, each atom, each molecule, each being (including humans), contains the divine life within. Each has been 'divinized', as Pope Francis teaches. Each is sacred and reflects the presence of Christ.

### **Conclusion**

There is a lot more that requires exploration as to how Christ is present in all dimensions of our universe. In the meantime, Richard Rhor's image of bread and cup/chalice hovering over our blue planet with Christ offering himself as spiritual food and drink for all people on earth and also reaching out into every corner of the cosmos, gives us a glimpse of what the Church is teaching today about the Eucharist being 'an act of cosmic love, the living centre of the universe, even when it is celebrated on the humble altar of a country church.'

What an awesome vision!

*A shorter version of this article was first published in NZ Catholic, 27 November 2016.*

### **A Walk in the Neighbourhood**

The two hill walk I call it  
Bush and stream three metres in  
That unique Aotearoa smell  
So absent anywhere else  
I clutch a green kawakawa leaf  
The cold texture spurs me on  
Just like the Pencarrow stones I carry  
Walking down the coast

I walk to a symphony  
Tui song and startled kereru in the  
hills  
Oystercatchers fossicking in the sand  
Black back gulls squawking, diving,  
soaring.  
I breathe easier and walk on  
Holding onto something  
Keeps the earth under me flat  
And secures my path on this planet

—Joanne Doherty

### **The Sunflower**

you hold yourself high  
proud and erect  
no sign of a sigh  
the simmering sun  
accentuates  
your golden splendour

stately, no less  
you almost caress  
the sky  
proud flower  
stand high  
when darkness draws nigh  
hide all your fear  
God is near

— Maureen Borell, a friend of the  
Christchurch CW for 29 years



# The Middle East – what could I do?

Margaret Ingram

The Israeli Air Force had just shot down a Syrian Air Force jet which had been detected in Israeli airspace a few km north-east of my kibbutz. This doesn't happen very often (I think it's not happened for 40+ years in fact). The pilot's name was Omran, which means 'solid structure'. He was not a young chap and had quite gentle soft features, not sharp, chiselled and gung-ho or macho. He had very round and kindly-looking eyes and a full but trimmed beard which made him look very pleasant and friendly.

My question to myself was, 'Now how am I to respond to this?' So, I lit a wee memorial candle. (A Jewish custom - you can buy them anywhere and they burn for 24 hours). They are made in a tiny tin, so you get a nice glow from them. Not at all like a bare candle feebly but bravely lighting up the dark. These ones give off a soft light suffusing the room rather than a flame flickering 'against all odds' as a symbolic witness

It brought us very close seeing that candle burning from all different angles when I was going about all the mundane household things, thinking about whatever else was on my mind, and dealing with anything that came to my attention. For a whole day, as I went about our house, there it was: bringing me back to his sudden and fiery death.

*NZ-born, Margaret Ingram, a Catholic Worker mother and grandmother living in a kibbutz on the Sea of Galilee in Israel, mourns the death of a Syrian pilot she has never met.*



## I remember you

welcome, dear one  
come in, darling son;  
you are safe  
you are whole  
you are free  
your aircraft, dear one  
your jet, darling son;  
down in flames  
up in smoke  
blown to bits  
but you -  
all cachet and panache  
full of banter and dash -  
in a flash  
became radiantly human  
arose a mother in Israel ... \*  
she lit a candle  
so a tiny flame  
would light your way  
and glow your memory  
in this tiny shining space  
|  
Allah  
Ar-Raqeeb \*\*  
the All-Observing  
the Watchful One  
saw:  
your secret sister  
mourning  
her secret brother

\* Judges 5:7

\*\* one of the 99 names of God in Islam

—Margaret Ingram

# Around the traps

**# ICCP Climate report** – The Planet needs life-altering changes - Life as we know it will need to make ‘life-altering changes’ to limit global warming to a level that will prevent its worst effects – and it will need to change quickly. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), a landmark global report about limiting global warming to 1.5C above pre-industrial levels, warned all countries need to make more aggressive cuts to emissions than ever before. It would likely require removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere more quickly through unproven and potentially risky technology.

The findings have implications for New Zealand, particularly around the role industries such as farming and tourism will play in achieving drastic cuts. To achieve 1.5C, the world as a whole would need to cut carbon emissions around 45 per cent by 2030, and methane emissions, much of it caused by dairy farming, by 35 per cent before 2050. *The Press*, 9 October 2018

**# Maori devastated by imported diseases, 1840 – 1900.** After the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840, diseases brought by the influx of European settlers – to which Maori had no immunity – had a devastating effect on the population and life expectancy. Poverty and overcrowding as a result of land alienation made it easier for diseases to spread and, by the end of the century, the Maori population was estimated to be 42,000, down from Captain Cook’s estimate in 1790 of 100,000. In 1891, Maori life expectancy was 25 for men and 23 for women. In 1886, 51 percent of Maori who died were younger than 15, compared to 14 percent of non-Maori. *The Press*, 2 August 2018

**# Immigrant workers exploited in NZ construction industry** – Unfair pay, uncertain working conditions and inadequate living conditions are among some of the issues migrant Filipino construction workers are facing, according to a new report conducted by trade union, E Tu. The report examined the experiences of Filipino migrant workers in the construction sector in Christchurch and Auckland through 2017 and 2018.

For example, Filipino migrant worker, Roseldo Honrada, who works as an electrician, received \$18 per hour for work, even though he has eight years previous experience as an electrician in the Philippines. His wage was about \$11 less than the average hourly NZ rate in the construction industry.

The E Tu report found many of the Filipino workers arrived in New Zealand with large debt burdens because they paid companies to arrange work for them in NZ. They also had numerous deductions taken from their pay, some of which appeared to be illegal. *Stuff*, 27 August 2018

**# Slavery alive and flourishing, even in NZ** – There is no slavery in New Zealand because Abraham Lincoln in the US and William Wilberforce in the UK dealt to that issue long ago! Think again. In 2016, there were an estimated 40.3 million victims of modern slavery in the world. Of that number, 24.9 million were in forced

labour – a process of deception to ensure industries such as construction, agriculture, horticulture, viticulture, the services and fishing make huge profits. Nearly two thirds of that number were in the Asia/Pacific region.

Human trafficking and exploitation are the third largest criminal ‘industry’ in the world, earning the exploiters US\$150 billion annually. However, there were only 9000 convictions globally in 2017. It is a low risk and high profit crime! Human trafficking involves (1) the recruitment, transportation, moving transfer or harbouring of persons through (2) deception and/or coercion for the purpose of (3) exploiting or facilitating the exploitation of that person. NZ had its first trafficking conviction in December 2016, and the culprit sentenced to nine years, six months in prison, and ordered to pay more than \$28 000 reparation to his victims. *NZ Catholic*, 12 August 2018

**# Parents in prison** – More than 23 000 New Zealand children have a parent in prison and, without the right support, they are nine times more likely to follow in their footsteps. The most recent figures released in March 2018, show Christchurch houses 13 percent of the country’s prison population. More than 920 prisoners live at Christchurch Men’s Prison, 260 at Rolleston Prison and 134 at Christchurch Women’s Prison. The NZ prison population as at March 2018 was 10,645 sentenced and 3316 people on remand. *The Press*, 20 September 2018

**# Rich List’s six-fold increase in wealth** – Research at Auckland University has shown that wealth held by the top 0.02 per cent of Kiwis has increased roughly twice as fast as the economy has grown. The wealth of 1-in-5000 kiwis has increased six-fold between 1996 and 2015, from about \$9.6 billion to about \$57.1 billion. As of 2015, this group held wealth equivalent to 23.9 percent of the total annual GDP of New Zealand, up from 6.7 percent in 1996. *The Press*, 18 September 2018

**# Subsidising oil exploration.** The NZ Government spends 20 times more on wooing oil and gas companies to New Zealand than it does on promoting renewable energy. Researcher Terrence Loomis discovered that the value of taxpayer subsidies to the oil and gas industry more than doubled from \$41m to \$88m between 2009 and 2016. Tax exemptions for drilling rigs and seismic ships, tax deductions for petroleum mining costs, or reduced petrol prices for sectors such as agriculture, forestry and fishing are various forms of subsidy. *New Zealand Herald*, 18 June 2017

**# Daily coal train to Fonterra factories** – ‘Each day I watch a coal train pass my house heading to Fonterra’s dairy processing plant at Clandeboye. Trucks vary from 12 to 20 and each carries 17 tonnes of coal. Clandeboye’s boilers burn two trucks of coal every hour. That is around 500 tonnes, pouring about 1100 tonnes of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere every day, seven days a week. Nine more of Fonterra’s factory also burn coal, producing 1.25 million tonnes of CO2 every year.’ Rosemary Penwarden, *Tui Motu*, October 2018, p9

**# Vector invests in weapons** – Vector, the Auckland lines company, has invested \$14 million in

mPrest, a software company half-owned by the Israeli State-owned Israeli defence company Rafael Advanced Defense Systems, which has supplied remote-controlled machine gun turrets being used in pill boxes along the Gaza border. Rafael supplies remote-controlled sentry Tech heavy-calibre machine gun pods that are designed to create a 1500-metre deep 'automatic kill zone' along the Gaza border. The turrets have reportedly killed dozens of Palestinians. Rafael has also made cluster bombs that are outlawed by the Convention on Cluster Munitions, which New Zealand but not Israel has signed. *The Press*, 13 October 2018

**# Banks' rort on 'massive scale'** – In a stinging interim report, the Australian Royal Commission into Banking said it found a rampant culture of greed and bad behaviour, with the big four banks most in focus which included Westpac and ANZ. Among the misdeeds were A\$1 billion of fees charged for no service, systemic mis-

selling of financial advice, insurance premiums taken from dead customers and firms lying to regulators. Companies preyed on the vulnerable, with services mis-sold to indigenous farmers with limited financial literacy and life insurance companies spying on mentally ill policyholders. *The Press*, 2 October 2018

**# Replacing Trident Submarines in the UK** will cost over UK200 billion pounds (NZ\$304 billion). Yet nuclear weapons do nothing for our security. The money would be far more sensibly spent on genuine needs, like the National Health Service. Our nuclear weapons are far from independent. We borrow from the US, on a regular rotating basis, the missiles on which to put our warheads. Getting rid of them would be a major step on the road to a war-free world. We only got them out of a sense of national vanity. It is time to grow up. Bruce Kent, *Abolish War*, August 2018

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## Child Sex Offenders – Today's Untouchables

Forrest Chambers

Back in the time of Jesus, lepers were absolutely shunned. They lived on the edge of town, often in the rubbish dumps ('Gehenna'/Hell). They were outcasts, untouchable, lest they defile the rest of Jewish society. They were shunned not merely because of illness, but also because they were deemed morally impure, living in a state of sin (either of their own, or inherited).

Today's 'lepers'/untouchables are child sex offenders.

I recently attended a community meeting called in response to the Department of Corrections planning to house a child sex offender in our local suburb. After he served his sentence, Corrections were supporting him into accommodation back in the community.

A representative of the Sensible Sentencing Trust told the meeting that child sex offenders 'can never be rehabilitated'. He proposed that they be placed in housing on prison grounds, to keep them away from the rest of the community. In the meeting there was general agreement with his view. Those present at the meeting seemed to share a general abhorrence of child sex offenders.

It is, of course, a horrible crime, which can leave lasting damage on survivors. Yet, what is the abhorrence based on, and does it lead to yet more human suffering? The reoffending rate for child sex offenders is actually lower than for all other types of offenders. Most express great shame and remorse when they face up to what they have done. Of course, not every sex offender is safe to release back into the community. Corrections/courts can apply restrictions when they perceive risk of re-offending. These decisions are based on in-depth assessment, not knee-jerk reactions and abhorrence.

The gut reaction is to keep sex offenders (like lepers in Jewish times) out of our communities, so we will all be safer (not defiled). However, the reality is that the vast majority of sex offences against children are committed

not by the 'stranger', but by the stepfather, family member, or other trusted adult. We do what we can to be aware of its possibility, to keep our children as safe as possible. But we cannot live life suspecting everyone, which is why it is such a difficult and emotional issue. It is abhorrent because it is ultimately about power, trust and betrayal, and the potential sinfulness of everybody.

By shunning convicted sex offenders, we do not make ourselves safer, but merely inflict further suffering on those who have served their sentence. We also perpetuate the mistaken view that there are 'bad people' (them) and 'good people' (us).

Jesus' response to lepers was to heal them and welcome them back into the human family. Jesus' actions deeply shocked the Jews who had society neatly divided up into 'good' and 'bad'. His message: we are not separated from God (and society) because of our sin or our failings. In fact, paradoxically, it is those who acknowledge their brokenness, failings or 'sin' who are able to connect with God.

Like Jesus, we must speak up on behalf of sex offenders who would be sent to 'Gehenna' by popular prejudice. In truth, healing for a leper, as for a sex offender, is largely made up of being accepted back into society, made up, as it is, of imperfect people... like us.

I spoke up at the meeting (a minority of one) saying that I did not agree that they could 'never be rehabilitated', and that, as a father of four children, I did not oppose a convicted sex offender living back in the community. Whenever the discussion is heated, hateful and intolerant, we all need to speak up on behalf of the excluded.

*Forrest Chambers, a parent of four children, is a long-time CW and a parishioner at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Palmerston North.*



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# Disarm Trident Walk Ends in Georgia

Steve Baggarly

Recently, some 50 people took part in the **Disarm Trident Peace Walk** from Savannah to Kings Bay, Georgia, in support of the seven Catholic peace activists of the Kings Bay Plowshares who are awaiting trial.

On April 4th, the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the seven entered Naval Station Kings Bay, home to six Trident ballistic missile submarines. Each Trident can carry the explosive power of some 1825 Hiroshima-sized atomic bombs—if they are ever used it will mean the end of the world. The activists carried hammers and bottles of their own blood into the base to ‘beat swords into plowshares,’ as the Hebrew Prophets envisioned. Finding no subs in port, they poured blood on the base logo, hammered on a concrete model of a Trident D5 missile, crisscrossed the administration building with yellow crime scene tape, and hung banners on the fence surrounding the nuclear weapons bunkers reading, ‘*The Ultimate Logic of Racism is Genocide – MLK*’, and ‘*The Ultimate Logic of Trident is Omnicide.*’ Two of the activists – Liz McAlister and Steve Kelly SJ - remain in the Glynn County Detention Center and five are out on house arrest. All await a hearing on their motion to argue the Religious Freedom Restoration Act in their defense, and then a trial date.

Organized by *Voices for Creative Nonviolence* and friends, the peace walk began in the rain at Forsythe Park in Savannah and continued for eight more days down coastal Georgia route 17. We hoped to walk all 126 miles to Kings Bay, but Hurricane Florence had other plans and two days were shaved off. It ended with a short walk and a two-hour vigil calling for nuclear disarmament at the main gate to the sub base.

## Deadly weapons - beautiful countryside

Most of the journey was through the rural coastal Georgia landscape which seeped into my bones as I walked through mile after mile after mile—the ancient live oaks and the loblolly pines, the grasses and reeds and tannin-coloured water in the swamps and wetlands, the egrets quietly hunting or startled and taking wing, the ubiquitous Spanish moss cloaking the area in mystery. In several places wide, lazy rivers spanned by old concrete bridges seemed timeless, and huge, vertical, billowing clouds plastered the sky between us and the unseen ocean to the east made it feel like we were walking inside a giant oil painting.

Amid the hauntingly beautiful landscape were



markers hinting at the area’s history. The matter-of-fact descriptions of prominent landholding families, governorships, military positions held, shipping facilities and rice, indigo, and cotton plantations, largely ignored the blood, sweat, and tears of enslaved blacks that soaked the land we trod. We were glad to be educated near Midway, Georgia by a Gullah Gee Chee descendent at a small DIY slavery museum as well as

by a couple of local activists.

Our walking days included September 9th, the 38th anniversary of the first Plowshares action. Of the eight people who acted then at the General Electric plant in King of Prussia, PA, which built nose cones for nuclear warheads, most were Catholic. **The current Kings Bay Plowshares community is all Catholic; Liz McAllister (formerly of Jonah House and widow of Phil Berrigan), Jesuit Fr. Steve Kelly, and Catholic Workers Martha Hennessy (a granddaughter of Dorothy Day), Mark Colville, Clare Grady, Patrick O’Neill, and Carmen Trotta.**

This is especially poignant as the Holy See was one of only three United Nations members to sign and ratify the *Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons* on the very first day it was open for ratification, 20 September 2018. Then in November, Pope Francis declared that the possession or the threat of use of nuclear weapons was to be ‘firmly condemned,’ signalling the end of the road for the Catholic Church’s sanction of nuclear deterrence and the existence of nuclear weapons.

Unfortunately, all of the nuclear weapons states boycotted the Treaty negotiations, and in the United States, politicians, the media, as well as the Church are completely silent about it. So, the message of the Plowshares movement continues to move through the land—if governments won’t disarm, the people must. Molly Rush, one of the original Plowshares 8, later wrote that as she hammered on the warhead nose cone she ‘put a hole in one and a dent in another. And, I thought, these things are as vulnerable as we are, and we can undo what has been done.’

This is the faith of the Kings Bay Plowshares 7 and the hope of those of us who walked the **Disarm Trident Peace Walk** along the Georgia coast.

*Steve Baggarly is a member of the Catholic Worker in Norfolk, VA and an arrested participant in past Plowshares actions. He walked the length of the Disarm Trident march.*

## Reviews

*Celia* -  
Director/producer  
Amanda Miller, 101  
min. Reviewer:  
Joanne McPadden  
Doherty



I attended the sellout premiere of *Celia* at the Embassy Theatre in Wellington, arriving to a noisy and expectant buzz in the foyer. Before the film had even begun, the entire audience stood and sang the waiata, Te Aroha, something I had never experienced before in a theatre in Aotearoa.

Celia Lashlie was in my class at St Mary's College in Wellington. I knew her as Ces, a tall, comical student with a wry grin, who wasn't afraid to challenge any perceived injustices or systems that needed improving. There were quite a few, and, while I had yet to find my own voice back in the late 60's, Celia already had!

The film made me cry often, seeing my friend so sad and in pain and with too short a time left with her kids and grandchildren and friends she loved. The film was beautifully made by Amanda Millar, who gently invited me to enter Celia's world – the birds who kept a close vigil, the buses coming and going through that unique Wellington tunnel, the rhythm of early morning and late night commuters, and all the while, Celia's family and friends caring for her.

This film has many powerful messages. I heard again, loud and clear, the ones for me as a mum and grandmother: 'growing gorgeous boys,' - and gorgeous girls too. *Celia* conveys her messages with compassion, hope, and humour, providing solutions for whanau at home, in schools, in the community, or in our prisons.

The film is interrupted with bleak screens of this country's most devastating social statistics about suicide, abuse, and imprisonment. Yet, these overwhelming graphics are separated with compelling stories of hope from Celia Lashlie and the people she worked alongside – whanau gathering in the central North Island, the principal and pupils at a boys' college, and the mothers gathering as whanau in the community. Celia's work in the prisons, her forceful debating of social challenges and the solutions she offers, come from real life stories.

Another powerful story woven through the film is artist Heather Main's portrait of her beloved friend, capturing that smile and twinkle and the powerful icons of Celia's values and mahi.

Celia's courageous, common sense, and her realistic and pragmatic approach provide some solutions for the significant challenges facing Aotearoa.

As the website *Celia's Army* says, 'Celia Lashlie was a strong advocate for social justice and believed that communities held the power to solving New Zealand's deep-seated issues such as the prevalence of domestic

violence, our high imprisonment rates and family poverty.' (<https://celiasarmy.nz/>)

I returned home - and didn't sleep that night, pondering Celia's inspirational contribution to our country, and reviewing and reconsidering my own. All New Zealand needs to see this film and continue the work of Celia Lashlie.

How can we do this together? I think the way ahead is best eclipsed in the words of the waiata sung at the premiere, along with a good dose of Celia's courage, analysis and humour.

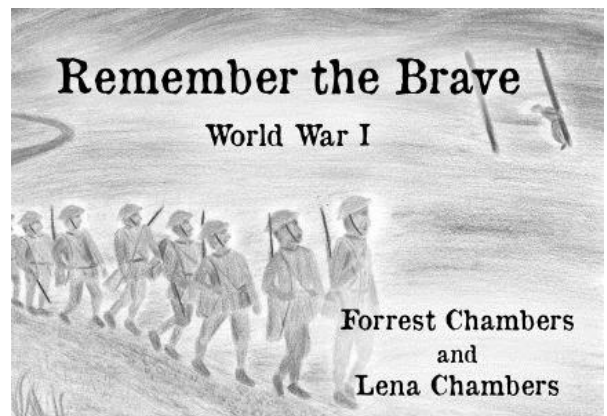
*'Te Aroha*

*Te whakapono*

*Me te rangimarie*

*Tatou tatou e'*

Rest in a deep and well-earned peace, dear friend.



**Remember the Brave – Forrest Chambers and Lena Chambers, Create Books, 49 Norrie Avenue, Raglan 3225, 32 pages, 2018, [www.createbooks.co.nz](http://www.createbooks.co.nz); Price \$20. Reviewer: Jim Consedine**

Every so often one is startled out of slumber to look in awe at something small crossing the desk. Such was my reaction to this lovely little book on Conscientious Objection in WWI – when it was a significant feature of New Zealand life.

Forrest and Lena Chambers have told the story of the moral bind of a NZ soldier in France who sees the treatment meted out to COs by the military and the torture they underwent. Anyone who has read Archibald Baxter's *We Dare Not Cease*, will recognise the tenets of what happened. This slim volume, beautifully illustrated by 12-year old Lena Forrest, is possibly aimed at children but is a great read for adults as well. It reflects on the core principle of war (killing), the role of Empire (blind obedience), the violence of the military establishment (torture) and the courage of those who resist killing others for moral reasons.

It's a lovely book which would grace any library and is especially suitable as a gift to children.

# Letters

Hastings,  
Hawkes Bay  
27 August 2018

Dear Jim,

I want to commend you for your article on usury (CG86). A few months ago I took out a 'loan' from a loan company called Pretty Penny who, incidentally, seem to have an office in Christchurch. I borrowed the princely sum of \$100 and have been struggling to pay back \$400!! I've since repaid \$200 and have battled with them to stop seeking the rest. They have now come up with \$84.80 as a final payment, which I shall make from my next superannuation payment on the 4th September and that had better be the end of it. What a terrible experience and that is only over \$100!

I rent my home and there is basically nothing left over after rent, insurances, a car payment and a regular payment to my electricity company, Genesis. Hence the need to build extra income. I feel that in a way I have fallen through the cracks and although I am trying so hard to lift myself out, it seems at times extraordinarily difficult. However one of the blessings is that it gives me first-hand experience of just how hard life can be for some people in this beautiful country of ours and that helps me focus on others and not myself. Although the daily reality has to be faced!

Thank you,

*Janice* (name withheld)

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15 August 2018

Dear Jim,

In your recent article, Usury - Alive and Well in Aotearoa, you state that the Church's teaching on usury changed 'for political and commercial reasons prevailing at the time'. Readers of *The Common Good* may care to know that in the ancient world, and for much of the Middle Ages, interest usually ran to twice or three times the amount borrowed. It was in the fifteenth century that 'acceptable' forms of borrowing emerged, with interest at five percent or less. This lesser amount proved acceptable,

and a distinction emerged between usury and reasonable lending. I would recommend Davis Graeber's book *Debt: The First 5000 Years* as an analysis of how money-lending emerged, the toll it has taken on society down the ages, and how its effects may be mitigated.

Kind regards

*Julian Vesty*

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Palmerston North

18 August 2018

Hi Jim

I have read your article on usury in the Spring 2018 edition of *The Common Good*. As way of humble correction, I believe a different interpretation of the 1917 Code of Canon Law would indicate the Church did not change its teaching. I have tried to understand both the legal and economic consequences of modern financial transactions and as a Catholic, the moral implications. Thank you for encouraging debate on this important subject. Fredrick Soddy, a Nobel prize winning nuclear chemist, thought that no social problem could be properly resolved without first reforming the financial system. I would agree.

Blessings and best wishes,

*John Kutyn*

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7 August 2018

Dear Jim,

Thank you for the latest issue of *The Common Good*. Each succeeding issue outdoes the previous one with valuable comment.

Muchas gracias,

+ *Bishop Owen Dolan* (Ret.)

## CW Website

Leading articles from the first 20 years of  
*The Common Good*  
Alternative funerals  
Restorative Justice  
Other theological issues  
[www.catholicworker.org.nz](http://www.catholicworker.org.nz)

## FUNERAL CHOICE

A Catholic Worker Project

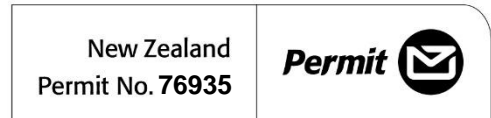
Cheaper alternatives to consumer funerals

[www.funeralchoice.co.nz](http://www.funeralchoice.co.nz)

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**The Common Good**

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 New Zealand



**WISDOM**

All wisdom traditions stream toward the same ocean of union. Buddhism affirms that there is only one of us, and therefore we are each responsible for every link in the web of being. Christianity offers us the unconditional mercy of an incarnational God who permeates the whole of creation with love. Judaism urges us to demonstrate our love for God in the way we treat each other and care for creation. Hinduism kindles the fire of devotion for reunification with the Beloved who is no other than our own true Self. Islam shares the peace that comes with complete submission to the One.

—Mirabai Starr, *The World Wisdom Bible: A New Testament for a Global Spirituality*